

Segui-Smith House (City Library)
Southwest corner Avilés Street and
Artillery Lane
St. Augustine
St. Johns County
Florida

HABS No. FLA-13
HABS
FLA

55-SAUG

3-

An addendum to
City Library (Spanish House)
Aviles Street and Artillery Lane
St. Augustine, Florida
in HABS Catalog (1941)

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HABS
FLA.

55 - SAUG

3 -

SEGUI-SMITH HOUSE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

St. Augustine, - 1754

The house now used as the St. Augustine Library was built by Bernardo Segui, eldest son of Bernardo, of Castille, Spain, who, at the time of Bernardo's birth, was auditor to the island of Minorca. Being in love with the daughter to the Spanish Captain who was sent to St. Augustine, Bernardo 2nd gave up his inheritance in Spain and obtaining an appointment from the Crown, came to St. Augustine about 1754, married the Senorita Agatha Villalonga, and built his home, the present library.

When Florida was ceded to the United States, in 1821, this building was rented to the family of General Kirby-Smith, who was born in this house. He was the son of Joseph L. Smith, Judge of the Supreme Court of Florida. He married Miss Cassie Seldon and brought her to the Segui house as his bride.

Later Mrs. Webster, sister of the General, had possession of the place, which was afterwards sold to Mr. and Mrs. John L. Wilson of Framington, Massachusetts, who in 1895, presented the property to the St. Augustine Library Association for their use as a free public library.

Revised Aug. 24 '36 T.T.W.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. FLA-13

Public
SEGUI-SMITH HOUSE (CITY LIBRARY)

HABS
FLA

An addendum to
Public City Library (Spanish House)
Aviles Street and Artillery Lane
St. Augustine, Florida
in HABS Catalog (1941)

55 - SAUG

3.

Address: Southwest corner Avilés Street and Artillery Lane, St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida.

Present Owner: City Library of St. Augustine.

Present Occupant and Use: City Library.

Measured drawings made of the Segui-Smith House by the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1936 indicate that the building was erected "in 1755 by Bernardo Segui of Spain." Documentary research in 1962 by staff members of the St. Augustine Historical Society has indicated that this information is incorrect and that the house, as it exists today, was built at a later date. The following account, based on that research, is quoted here in toto from the report which is available in the Library of the Historical Society (22 St. Francis Street, St. Augustine, Florida):

Records indicate that [the Segui-Smith House] was probably completely rebuilt during the early part of the second Spanish period [1784-1821], although there had been a small stone house on the site shown on the de la Puente (1764) map as the property of Antonio Urbano de Melo. . . .

During the British period [1764-1783], the block was granted to one Captain Henry Skinner, and the corner where the library is located had at least six owners, of whom we know very little. The last British owner, William Slater, sold the house to Pablo Cortinas who sold it to Bernardo Segui in 1786. It was then described as a house of stone and wood with a kitchen. Two years later, in the key to the de la Rocque (1788) map, the description is somewhat clearer. It was a two story house, the first floor of a thin wall of tabby and the second floor of wood, in only fair condition. The floor plan shown on the map does not resemble the present floor plan at all.

Bernardo Segui was born in Minorca about 1743 and came to Florida as a member of the New Smyrna colony. His wife, Agueda Villalonga, was also a native of Minorca and three of their thirteen children were born in New Smyrna before

the survivors of this colony moved to St. Augustine in 1777. 3-

Bernardo died in November, 1813, and at that time was Captain of the Urban Militia. He left no will, so experts appraised his estate. The house on Hospital [Aviles] Street is described in detail, and from this appraisal, it is obvious that Bernardo had completely rebuilt the house, but whether he retained any of the former structure is not known. It is doubtful, however, because in 1813 it was built entirely of stone (mamposteria) and was three stories high, having a shingle roof, glazed windows, two stairways each with a cupboard below, and a balcony. There were chimnies for the sala (parlor) above and below, and some of the floors were of wood, while some floors were of hormigon (a fine plaster, probably much finer than tabby). It also had a separate panaderia y cocina (bakery and kitchen) with 2 ovens, 2 chimnies, a wooden floor, 3 doors, 1 window, and there was an outside privy. While this 1813 appraisal has not been completely translated, it appears that Bernardo Segui's house may have closely resembled the present building.

One of the Segui sons, Bernardo Jose Luis, born in St. Augustine in 1786, became quite prominent in local affairs. He held the office of syndic, or civil magistrate in the city council that was formed in 1812, a position he still held when the U. S. took over in 1821. During the territorial period he also held the offices of mayor, post-master and county clerk.

In 1824, after the United States had procured Florida, the widow of Bernardo Segui, Sr. rented the house to Judge Joseph Lee Smith, of the U. S. Circuit Court, who later purchased it. It was in this building that Edmund Kirby-Smith was born and spent his childhood years. The Smiths further remodelled the house.

At the time of the outbreak of the War Between the States, Edmund Kirby-Smith was an officer in the United States Army. Resigning his commission he joined the Confederate States Army, rising to the rank of General; one of the seven full generals of the Confederacy, and the last to surrender his army.

The Smiths retained ownership of the building until 1887, when it was purchased by E. P. Dismukes, who in turn sold it to John L. Wilson in 1896. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson gave the building for use of the Library, which had been organized in 1874. In February of 1896 the Library was moved to its present home, having previously been housed in the old government building.

Prepared by Mrs. Doris Wiles, Secretary; and Mrs. Eugenia Aranas of St. Augustine Historical Society
1962